Facultad de Educación

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Rhythm, play and games
Grado online de Educación



RHYTHM, PLAY AND GAMES

UNIT 1: The Ludic Approach. Theoretical Framework.

Versión	Fecha	Motivo de modificación	Elaboración	Revisión	Aprobación

GLOBAL CAMPUS NEBRIJA

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THE LUDIC APPROACH

What are the main goals of this unit?

1	• To understand the importance of playing in the educative context.
2	• To know how playing affects children development.
3	• To know the different types of play activities we can put into practice in the classroom and outdoors.
4	• To reflect on how to motivate children in class.
5	• To know about the different authors and their theories about playing and children development.

Unit 1. THE LUDIC APPROACH

1. PLAY ACTIVITIES

1.1. Concept

"The human being is not only homo sapiens and homo faber (the man who thinks and work). He is also homo ludens (the man who plays)" (Ander-Egg, E. 2007:368).

This ludic dimension is something inherent to culture and, therefore it changes according to cultural changes. In fact, "*play activities reflect the system of cultural values, ideas and expressions*" (Adapted text from Ander-Egg, E. 2007:369). Because of this cultural aspect of play activities, they are essential when teaching children. Furthermore, these activities become an essential part of the children sociocultural development.

We can find in the dictionary the definition of **play** as "**a range of voluntary, intrinsically motivated activities normally associated with recreational pleasure and enjoyment**" (Garvey,. C. 1990:5). Thus, play activities are appealing for people in general and children particularly. When children are playing, teachers and educators should focus not on the activity but on their attitude, paying attention to the relationships the activity is promoting and the challenges children are overcoming (or not). This information will help us to provide children with the support they need to facilitate their development.

Although play activities do not seem serious enough to include them in school, they offer us the opportunity to overcome the boredom of tedious work. We can play these activities in contact with the natural environment in order to promote respect towards it, and at the same time, we facilitate psychomotor, sensory, social, creative and expressive development. Because of this, teachers should include this kind of activities in their annual plans.

Taking into account this, we can say that play activities are appropriate in the school because they contribute to children's personality:



How do play activities contribute to children's development?

- **Physical and motor development:** improving strength, velocity, muscular development, coordination, senses perception, etc.
- **Intellectual development:** facilitating understanding, solving problems strategies, etc.
- **Creativity development:** promoting imagination, symbolic thinking and manual work ability.
- **Emotional development:** expressing experiences, motivating self-confidence and overcoming frustration among others.
- **Social development:** participating in simulated situations, accepting roles and functions, cooperating and taking responsibilities.
- **Cultural development:** copying reference models from the social context according to the geographic area and historic conditions.

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 29)

Play activities are a right for children. They need playing in order to fully develop in a healthy and happy way. It was recognized as a right by UNICEF in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, article 31st: "*Every child has the right to relax, play and joy in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities".*

1.2. Characteristics of play activities

According to García and LLull (2009), playing:

- Is free
- Is pleasant
- Involves activity
- Is innate and characteristic of childhood
- Has an intrinsic purpose.
- Organizes actions in a specific way.
- Involves interaction with reality.
- Promotes socialization.
- Toys and other resources are not necessary.
- Constitutes a stimulating element.

1.3. Classification

According to Ezequiel Ander-Egg (2005) we can find four ways to express these activities when planning. Sometimes they mix together but each one has a particular meaning.

- **Traditional festivals**.

They are social activities that express the social and cultural life of a region. We can take an advantage of these festivals to celebrate the whole school together. Some festivals we can celebrate at school are regional festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Peace Day among others. If the school is bilingual we celebrate English-speaking countries festivals such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Saint Patrick's Day and so on.

- **Games**

According to the wordreference dictionary, a game is "an activity in which players compete against others, involving skills, chance or endurance and played according to a set of rules for the amusement of the players of the spectators". Games can support the children social, cognitive, linguistic and emotional development. Games should be adapted to the characteristics and needs of the group taking into account the age of its members, life moment, disabilities and necessities.

- Types of games

For Ander-Egg (2005), games can be classified according to their goals in seven groups:

1. Body games: Free dancing, body language and relaxing activities.
2. Sport games: racers and ball games, among others.
3. Drama games: mimo, puppets, masks, theatre, and so on.
4. Sculptural games: collective jigsaw puzzle, crafts, modeling, collective painting, etc.
5. Rhythmic games: musical instruments workshop, songs, chants, dances,…
6. Oral games:, riddles, tongue twisters, word games, debates, chained words, …
7. Board games: ludo, chess, game of the Goose, etc.

We will also add another group of games focused on social development: Social games. This group of games will include introduction, problem solving, communicative and cooperative games among others.

- **Amusement activities**

Amusement activities are essential to break away from the daily workload, to support psychological balance. Some amusement activities may be playing, reading, watching TV, going to the theatre, cinema, etc. They are free (not guided) and pleasure is its purpose. Children go to the playground during the break time and they are free to play football, to run, to sit and talk, etc when they are at school. This unscheduled time is essential for them to continue with classes.

- **Sport activities**

We should take care when putting into practice these activities because they tend to foster competition among children. Sport activities are indispensable for health because they release stress and strengthen our muscles. At the same time they improve the psychological balance and this has a positive effect to face an intellectual job.

It is important to differentiate sport activities and sport games. Sport activities point out the sportsperson abilities to achieve an outcome. In contrast, the team work leads a sport game.

Another play activity we will develop in this discipline is **storytelling** as through it children learn about the cultural aspects of the country the story is from having fun at the same time.

All these activities are appealing for children and we can take advantage of them in order to motivate them and support children development (physical, social, linguistic, emotional and cognitive development).

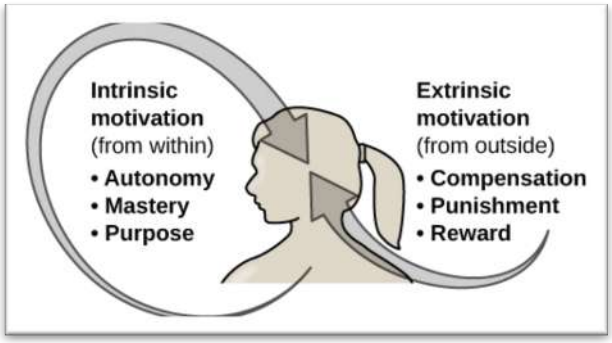
SUMMARY

- A play activity is an activity full of play or fun.
- Teachers can use play activities to motivate children towards learning.
- Play activities can be divided into five groups: traditional festivals, games, amusement activities, sport activities and storytelling.

2. MOTIVATION

Teachers have to face a big challenge everyday: How to motivate students towards learning. Motivation is the engine that leads our lives. We need some kind of motivation to do all we do, for example, we wake up early in the morning to go to the university in order to become teachers in the future or we live a healthy life in order to become older. Motivation is a strength that has to fight against other strengths (such as resting more time or eating whatever we want without taking into account our health). Depending on the intensity of our motivation, we will carry out activities or not. Learning in itself is not a reason to make an effort for most Infant and Primary Education students. This is the most challenging task for teachers: to motivate our students towards the classroom activities, towards learning. In order to do so, we as teachers should include appealing activities in our planning, plenty of fun, where children feel confident and safe and learning is seen as an achievable challenge.

When planning an activity we should take into consideration two kinds of motivation: **Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation**.



https://courses.lumenlearning.com/foundationsofedx81xmaster/chapter/extrinsic-and-intrinsic-rewards

2.1. Intrinsic motivation

Sometimes, the students are interested in the contents we are dealing with in class. Maybe they like the topic or have had a positive experience related to it. For example, a student that is involved in a non-govermmental organization (NGO) focused on protecting animal endangered species will face the unit "The animals" with a positive attitude. He will show interest in learning about groups of animals, its main characteristics, etc. It is even possible that he is interested in sharing his experiences in the NGO with his classmates and teacher. We can instill intrinsic motivation providing this child with positive feedback.

Intrinsic motivation entails internal rewarding behaviour. It is something personal so it is something difficult to tap into. Consequently, communication between teacher and students is vital. Teachers need to talk to the students, listen to their interests, difficulties, problems in their lives in order to highlight their strongest points and go over or reinforce their weakest ones. Then, teachers can use this information to help them hook into the topic.

Intrinsic motivation is a skill that students can cultivate during their whole lives. Often the problem is not the topic but the way we teach this topic. Teachers have to show their student how to learn (Learning to learn competence): how to read a text and extract the most important information, how to pronounce/write some words in English, how to work in group collaborating and respecting others, and so on.

Due to the fact that play activities are appealing to young children, we can use them to motivate students intrinsically. Thus, we can sing a song to practice pronunciation or to acquire a grammar structure, play a drama activity to introduce or review vocabulary or play a game to promote cooperative work, for instance.

2.2. Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation comes from **outside the student**. When a student is not motivated towards a topic or an activity, teachers need to motivate him/her through a rewarding system or an appealing activity. For example, teachers can reward the students that do homework, read a book, speak in English in class, collaborate with others or participate in class.

Positive feedback after a positive behaviour will reinforce this positive attitude towards learning. It is important to highlight the strongest points and to list the weakest ones as a list of recommendations to improve performances in the future when giving feedback to children. We can use the "two stars and a wish" technique, where the class mates (or the teacher) provide feedback through two positive ideas and one aspect to improve.

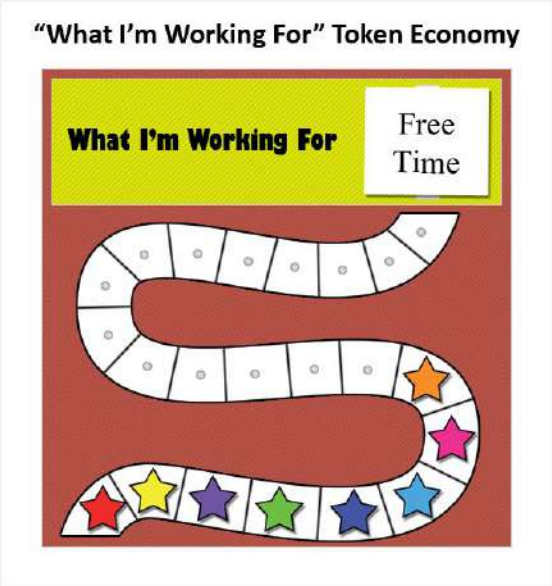
Here you have some examples of rewarding systems that can be useful in your teaching practice.

REWARDING SYSTEMS

TOKEN ECONOMY

It is a positive reinforcement program for building up an appropriate performance in the classroom. We can use this in play activities, checking participation, collaboration, good manners, noise level, and so on. The rewards may be: free time, singing their favourite song, playing their favourite game, stickers, etc.

Examples



https://es.pinterest.com/explore/econom%C3%ADa-de-fichas/?lp=true



http://www.iloveaba.com/2013/04/using-token-boards.html

TASK CONTRACT

There is a physical contract that both, students and teacher, sign. This contract may point out some challenges that students need to achieve in order to get a reward. We can create contracts at the beginning of an activity in order to establish roles and responsibilities in small groups (or big group if necessary). Thus, children will know what we expect from them beforehand, individually and as a team. We usually use contracts to manage behaviour in the classroom but we can use them as a normal tool in order to show students that all of them have responsibilities in the activities (not only the ones that misbehave) and will be rewarded after a well done job.

ICT RESOURCES: CLASSDOJO

1) It is a free online resource for teachers that can be used for many purposes:

- To create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, a feeling of group/team.
- To promote skills such as hardworking, participation, doing homework, collaborating in small groups, sharing materials, speaking in English, and so on.
- To share pictures and videos with the students and parents.
- To communicate with parents let them know about their children and to focus on positive feedback to improve children motivation.

To know more about classdojo : www.classdojo.com



SUMMARY

- Teachers should motivate children towards learning.
- There are two types of motivation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic.
    - Intrinsic motivation: personal motivation.
        - Teacher-children communication is basic to know more about our students' interests and needs.
        - Individual/group challenges.
        - Play activities
    - Extrinsic motivation: it comes from outside the student. We can use:
        - Positive feedback
        - Rewarding systems, such as token economy, task contract, ICT resources, etc.

3. PLAY. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many scholars have studied the incidence of playing in children development. We can say in general terms that playing provides children with tools that will facilitate cognitive, physical, social, linguistic and emotional development.

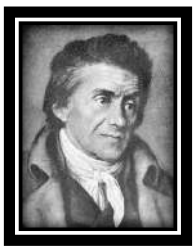
In order to establish a theoretical framework about the importance of play for children development, we will briefly review some of these theories.

CLASSIC THEORIES

3.1. Friedrich Fröebel (1782-1852) and Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827)



Friedrich Fröebel
https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Fr%C3%B6bel



Johan H. Pestalozzi
http://www.memoriachilena.cl/602/w3-article-99602.html

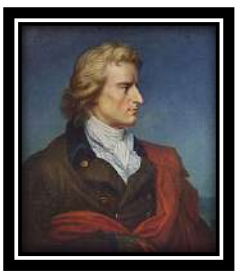
The benefits of play activities have been already studied by **Friedrich Fröebel** and **Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi** in the XVIII century. Both scholars pointed out the importance of freedom in child development and play as the center of the learning process. In fact, Fröebel considered that playing for children is like working for adults, because through playing children develop personality.

Fröebel created the concept of **Kindergarten** that was based on creativity and playing. He established that children express creativity through playing. Children learn through songs, stories, games and materials especially designed for them. According to his book, The Education of man (1825), "play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul". Fröebel also published the book "Mother-Play and Nursery songs" which compiles poetry, music and pictures for the noble culture of child life, with notes to the mother.

3.2. Surplus Energy Theory. Herbert Spencer (1855) and Friedrich Schiller (1861).



Herbert Spencer
https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbert_Spencer



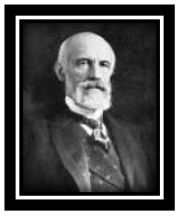
Friedrich Schiller
https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Schiller

These authors established that human beings do not have to spend all energy to survive. Thus, they believed that playing is a means to release energy. This energy is accumulated in the child because he does not have responsibilities as adults have. Adults are responsible of self-preservation feeding and protecting children.

"Applied to childhood, children's body used to accumulate energy that is not released in any physical or creative important activity. Thus, they use playing as an alternative".

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 17)

3.3. Stanley Hall. Recapitulation Theory (1904).



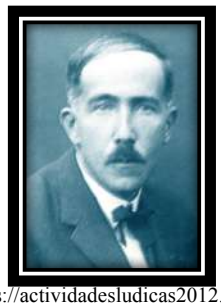
http://psychodevelopment.weebly.com/g-stanley-hall.html

"Hall explained the different games appearance order explaining that children copy activities from ancestor, representing the different stages in human evolution. Thus, during the animal stage children hide or swing like primates. During the wild stage children hunt and hide. In the nomadic stage they are interested in animals. In the Neolithic stage, children play with dolls and dig in the sand. And finally, in the tribal stage, they play in teams".

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 17)

According to this theory, playing constitutes a process that recalls how humans live in society from the past to the current time.

3.4. Karl Groos. Pre-exercise Theory (1896-1899).



https://actividadesludicas2012.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/teorias-de-los-juegos-piaget-vigotsky-kroos/

Karl Groos based his research in animal's behaviour. He established that animals play when they do not have to worry about feeding and safety. The skills animals develop when playing will be useful for survival.

He also considered playing as training for adult life, as a means for significative learning.

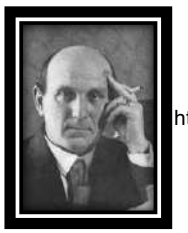
"Thus, playing is an essential way for learning, defined by a list of strategic behaviour that allow the individual development and survival(...). For children, the outcome of playing is in the process more than in the results and this allows them to experiment freely."

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 18)

Motivation is basic for playing. Playing helps children to overcome difficulties and this pleasant feeling motivates children towards continue playing.

MODERN THEORIES

3.5. Frederik J.J. Buytendijk. Game General Theory (1935)



https://www.ecured.cu/Frederik_J._J._Buytendijk

For this author, "playing is a way to express autonomy and it is determined by three strengths: the freedom strength (the necessity of removing obstacles in the environment in order to promote autonomy), the desire of integration with the environment and the tendency to repeat (children used to play the same game as a routine)."

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 19)

3.6. Edouard Claparède. The Fiction Theory (1934)



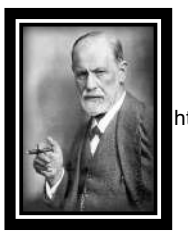
https://www.emaze.com/@AQZTWTIT/%C3%89douard-Clapar%C3%A8de

According to Edouard Claparéde, "The key of playing is fiction, the way people represent reality and react to it. (…) Each person reacts differently. It depends on his characteristics (culture, age, gender, etc.). For Claparède, what matters is the fiction created by the game and the way the player transforms behaviour because of this fiction".

(Text adapted from García, A. and LLull, J. 2009: 19)

Thus, through playing children pretend to be another person, satisfying their private desires.

3.7. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Psychoanalytic Theory



http://lamasbolano.com/blog/sigmund-freud/

Freud considered playing as a self-expression, the means to express and satisfy needs. The child finds pleasure when playing and expresses his unconscious wishes in order to satisfy them. Playing is a way to project traumatic experiences, to relive them and solve them. Because of this, playing becomes an extraordinary opportunity to identify traumatic experiences and he took advantage of it in its diagnostic function.

3.8. Rosa Agazzi (1866-1951) and Carolina Agazzi (1870-1945). The Nursery School Method.



https://www.emaze.com/@AZRIITZR/Presentation-Name

These Italian pedagogues focused their works in Infant education (0-6 y.o. children). Their method is based on respecting children spontaneity and freedom and introducing contents through play activities. They also introduced songs at the beginning of the day as a routine.

Their pedagogical principles are:

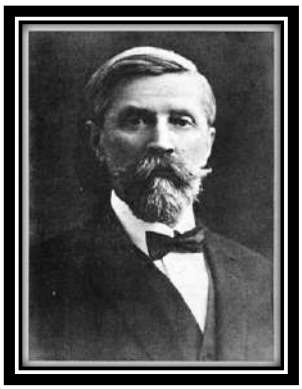
- Knowledge of the child through observation.
- Character globalization: Maintain the principle of globalization in teaching young children.
- Assessment of the child's activity.
- Value of joy: free and organized play into a nurturing environment that respects children's rhythms and needs.
- Value of order: material, aesthetical, spiritual, moral, social and harmonious.
- All this is based on the intelligent use of things in language education and the senses from contact with nature and objects through two instruments:
    - The educational museum consists on diverse collections of small things and objects, children and educators are contributing. These objects are endowed with characteristics of simplicity and clarity that make them attractive to children and encourage the game and the acquisition of knowledge as important as the shapes, sizes, volume, etc.
    - Passwords: these are symbols intelligible to help children to order their business and preserve the order of things and the environment.

Key areas in the Agazziano system are:

- Sensory Education: Develops sorting by colors, materials and shapes of objects.
- Instruction intellectual exploration is based on the natural world and the perception of the concepts.
- Education of feeling: against aggression. Develops practicing religion, physical education and moral education

(Adapted text from Jacquot, B. 2012)

3.9. Ovide Decroly (1871-1932). Centers of Interest Method.



http://portafoliodepedagogia2014.blogspot.com.es/2014/06/la-escuela-nueva-johann-friedrich.html

For Decroly, children learn when something motivates them; thus, teachers should find what he called **centers of interest**. "We will call interest the internal sign, common to all the needs and feelings that a person has (desire being the conscious form of this phenomenon), while curiosity is the external sign" (...). In other words, "a pedagogy of interest therefore potentiates children's basic motivations better than a pedagogy of reproduction, while it also frees their creativity" (Decroly, cited in Dubreucq 2001: 6). Hence, play activities fits Decroly's ideas since they promote children involvement in their own learning process.

Decroly also emphasized the role of **games in early school as a way to prepare children for life**. "What must be emphasized in regard to play is its role as preparation for serious activities; it makes the transition between instinctive activity, in the restricted sense, and work . . ." (Decroly, 1927 cited in Dubreucq, F. 2001: 12).

Summarizing, Decroly created the Centers of interest linking three concepts: individual learning, motivation and globalization. The Centers of interest are focused on the real capacities and needs of the children in order to facilitate their development through play.

3.10. María Montessori (1870-1952). The Montessori Education Method



https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/m/montessori.htm

Montessori education method is based on two principles:

1) Children need to interact with their environment in order to construct their minds.
2) Free interaction within a controlled environment (according to her model) may facilitate an optimal children development.

María Montessori explained in her book "The Absorbent mind" that *"the impressions not only penetrate the mind of the child, but form it. They become incarnate. The child makes his own 'mental flesh' by using the things that are in his environment. We have called this Absorbent Mind". (Montessori, M. 1949:35)*. According to this statement, the environment teachers provide children with will determine their minds. Thus, we should create in our classrooms a free, relaxing, stimulating and safe environment in order to promote spontaneity and self-esteem in our students. Our work as teachers is not only to teach but *"to help the absorbent mind in its work of development*" (Montessori, M. 1949:38). Therefore, children become the center of the learning process and teachers must support this process providing them with appealing activities that connect children to their environment.

Through play activities and materials created by María Montessori children will learn unconsciously, enjoying the process and learning from the experience. In this sense, teachers are like magicians, facilitating the children development in a safe and enriching environment, and this magic is what each educator needs to develop in order to become a good guide for the students.

On the other hand, **Montessori** emphasized the notion of **autoeducation** of children: "*Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual. It is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences upon the environment*" (Montessori 1949:7). This concept supports the importance of an enriching environment in the learning process.

3.11. Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). Theory of Cognitive Development



http://www.childdevelopmentmedia.com/articles/play-the-work-of-lev-vygotsky/

For Vygotsky, when children play, an unconscious process is affecting all aspects of their lives. **Playing supports children development and shapes how children understand the world**, **how they acquire language and how they learn.** When children are playing they make sense of the world talking to themselves or to others. Therefore, social learning precedes development. Learning is a social process and interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development.

Vygotsky believed that everything is learned in two levels:

- In interaction with others
- Integrating the new information to the individual's mental structure.

"*Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals*." (Vygotsky, L. 1978:57).

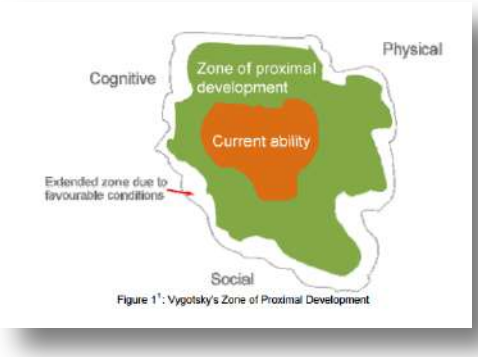


Figure 1[1]: Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

http://www.ceebl.manchester.ac.uk/events/archive/aligningcollaborativelearning/Vygotsky.pdf

The Zone of proximal development is the area for which the student is cognitively prepared, but requires help and social interaction to fully develop (Briner, 1999).

Vygotsky recognizes that playing fosters children development because it creates Zone of proximal development that allows the child to face challenges individually or with others.

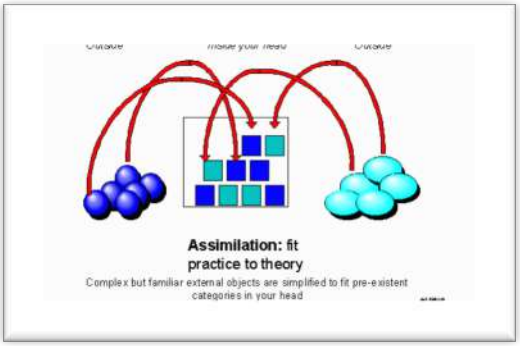
3.12. Jean Piaget (1896-1980). The Cognitive theory



https://actividadesludicas2012.wordpress.com/2012/11/12/teorias-de-los-juegos-piaget-vigotsky-kroos/

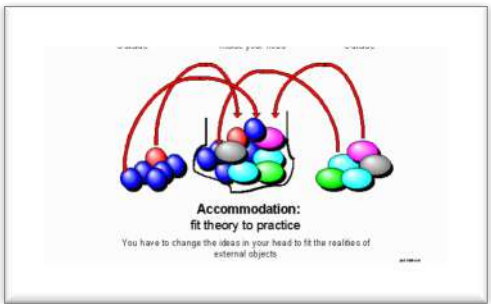
This author considered that **children need to play in order to interact with the environment.**

Play reflects the two fundamental characteristics of the children development, the establishment of new mental structures: **assimilation and accommodation**. When the child plays assimilates information from the environment, relates it to his reality and transforms it.



http://doceo.co.uk/l&t/learning/assimacc.htm

Then, through accommodation, the new information is included in pre-existent "files" in the child's internal world.



http://doceo.co.uk/l&t/learning/assimacc.htm

Therefore, when playing, children are constantly adapting to their environment. Furthermore, playing allows children to face challenges and overcome difficulties they will face (o have faced) in their lives.

In conclusion, when playing the child is assimilating new information and when repeats and consolidates actions he is accommodating this new data in his internal world.

SUMMARY

Many scholars have studied the incidence of playing in children development.

CLASSIC THEORIES

- **Frederich Fröebel and Johan H. Pestalozzi:**
  - Consideration of freedom in child development and play as the center of the learning process.
  - Fröebel created Kindergatens that were based on creativity and playing.
- **Herbert Spencer and Friedrich Schiller:**
  - Surplus Energy Theory: Playing is a means to release energy.
- **Stanley Hall:**
  - Recapitulation Theory: Playing follow the same stages as human evolution.
- **Karl Groos:**
  - Pre-exercise Theory: Consideration of playing as training for adult life.
  - He highlighted motivation as an essential element for playing

MODERN THEORIES:

- **Frederik J.J. Buytendijk.**
  - The General Game Theory: Playing is determined by tree strengths: Freedom, Desire of integration with the environment and Tendency to repeat.
- **Edouard Claparède.**
  - The Fiction Theory. The key of playing is Fiction and the way people represent reality and react to it.
- **Sigmund Freud:**
  - Psychoanalytic Theory: Consideration as a means to express and satisfy needs.
  - Playing becomes an extraordinary opportunity to identify traumatic experiences.
- **Rosa and Carolina Agazzi:**

  Nursery school method. Their method is based on respecting children spontaneity and freedom and introducing contents through play activities.
- **Ovide Decroly:**
  - Centers of interest method. Emphasis on motivation for children learning.
  - Emphasis on the role of games in early school as a way to prepare children for life.
- **María Montessori:**
  - The Montessori Education Theory. It is based on two main principles:
    - Children need to interact with their environment in order to construct their minds.
    - Free interaction with a controlled environment may facilitate an optimal children development.
  - Autoeducation: education is acquired by experiences upon the environment.
- **Lev Vygotsky:**
  - Theory of Cognitive Development. Learning is a social process and interaction plays a fundamental role in cognitive development.
  - .Playing supports children development and shapes how children understand the world, how they acquire language and how they learn.
- **Jean Piaget:**
  - The Cognitive Theory. Play reflects the two fundamental characteristics of the children development, the establishment of new mental structures: assimilation and accommodation.
  - Children need to play in order to interact with the environment.

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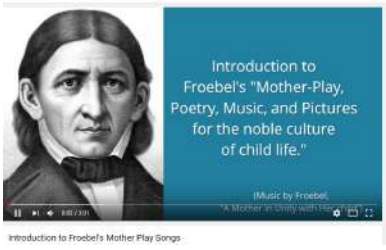
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- Fröebel, F. “Mother-Play and Nursery songs”:
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- United Nations Convention of the rights of the child (UNICEF): http://www.unescocentre.ulster.ac.uk/pdfs/pdfs_uncrc/uncrc_summary_version.pdf